

Message Text

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71

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 DRC-01 /115 W

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R 121605Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4125

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 4434

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SOCI, GR

SUBJECT: SERAPHIM MOVES AGAINST OPPONENTS

1. SUMMARY. IN EMPHATIC NATIONAL TV AND RADIO ADDRESS

JULY 11 ARCHBISHOP SERAPHIM DENOUNCED "HIGH ECCLESIASTICAL TREASON" COMMITTED BY "DARK FORCES WHO OPPOSE PACIFICATION OF CHURCH." HE THREATENED PRIVATE RELIGIOUS REFORM GROUPS, PRESUMABLY ZOI AND STOIR, WITH LEGAL SANCTIONS UNLESS THEY CONFORM TO PRESENT CHURCH ADMINISTRATION'S DESIRE FOR HARMONY. RADIO AND TV BULLETIN FOLLOWED ADDRESS WITH REPORT THAT NINE MORE IERONYMIST BISHOPS WERE REMOVED FROM OFFICE EARLIER IN DAY OF JULY 11. END SUMMARY.

2. ARCHBISHOP SERAPHIM WHO WAS ELECTED AT INSTIGATION

OF PRESENT MILITARY REGIME IN JANUARY TOOK MAJOR STEP TOWARD CONSOLIDATING POWER JULY 11 WHEN BISHOPS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN PRESENT HEIRARCHY VOTED TO OUST NINE OTHER BISHOPS, WHO THUS JOIN THREE BISHOPS EARLIER REMOVED.. BISHOP LEONIDAS OF THESSALONIKI WAS AMONG THOSE REMOVED AND VOTING IN THIS INSTANCE -- TWENTY-NINE FOR REMOVAL, SEVEN FOR RETENTION -- WAS CONFIDENTIAL

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TYPICAL OFF ALL NINE ACTIONS. (COMMENT: SERAPHIM HAS BEEN

GOVERNING FOR PAST SIX MONTHS WITH MINORITY IN CHURCH
HEIRARCHY OF SEVENTY-TWO BISHOPS. HE WILL OBTAIN
THEORETICAL ABSOLUTE MAJORITY WITH REPLACEMENTS AND
NEW POSITIONS CREATED DURING HIS TENURE.)

3. OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT FURTHER EXPLAINED THAT
HIERARCHY HAD VOTED TO RETAIN IN OFFICE NINE OTHER
IERONYMIST BISHOPS WHO HAD SOUGHT AND RECEIVED PARDON
FOR THEIR IRREGULAR APPOINTMENTS BY FORMER
ARCHBISHOP IERONYMOS AND THEIR PARTICIPATION IN HIS
RULE. STATUS OF TEN OTHER BISHOPS ARE TO BE REVIEWED
LATER BY HIERARCHY.

4. IN HIS SECOND NATIONAL ADDRESS SINCE TAKING OFFICE,
SERAPHIM DID NOT MENTION THE ACTIONS TAKEN EARLIER IN
THE DAY AGAINST HIS OPPONENTS BUT RATHER SOUGHT IN A
FIFTEEN MINUTE TALK AT PRIME TV TIME 10:00 P.M. TO
EXPLAIN BACKGROUND OF STRUGGLE. ARCHBISHOP SAID HE
TOOK OFFICE AND WAS GIVEN EXTRAORDINARY POWERS IN
CONSTITUENT ACT NO. 3 IN ORDER TO REGUALRIZE AN
UNCANONICAL AND SELF-SERVING HIERARCHY. HE SAID THAT HE SOUGHT
TO BE A LEADER OF RECONCILIATION AND ALLOWED IERONYMOS
TO RETAIN HIS HONORIFIC TITLE IN RETIRMENT EVEN THOUGH
SERAPHIM CONSIDERED HIMSELF TO BE THE SUCCESSOR TO
ARCHBISHOP CHRYSOSTOMOS WHOM IERONYMOS ILLEGALLY
OUSTED.

5. IN ADDRESS SERAPHIM WAS SHORT ON SPECIFIC CHARGES
AGAINST IERONYMOS GROUP EXCEPT THAT THESE BISHOPS
"DISTURBED RELATIONS/ WITH PHANAR. SERAPHIM BASED
MUCH OF SPEECH UPON THESES OF CLIMATE OF CONSPIRACY
IN WHICH SOME BISHOPS AND REFORM GROUPS SUCH AS
ZOI AND SOTIR OPERATED. ALTHOUGH ALL GREEK PAPERS
TREATED ARCHBISHOP'S "TREASON" THEME IN LEAD HEADLINES,
PRO-GOG ACROPOLIS AND SENSATIONALIST-INCLINED APOVEVMATINI
SINGLED OUT ALLEGATION ABOUT SUB-ROSA POLITICAL GROUP
AS CHIEF EVIDENCE OF CONSPIRACY.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH OFFICIAL EXCUSE FOR NEW CHURCH
ADMINISTRATION WAS CANONICAL CONFUSION OVER LEGITIMACY
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OF BISHOPS, THE PURGE UNDER WAY IS PRIMARILY POLITICAL.
BISHOPS ARE BEING RETAINED OR
RELEASED SOLELY ON GROUNDS OF WHETHER THEY WILLING TO
CONFORM IN VIEW TO NEW CHURCH LEADERSHIP. THE HARSH
INFERENTIAL ATTACKS UPON ZOI AND SOTIR, WHOSE NATIONAL
MEMBERSHIPS INCLUDE IERONYMOS AND FORMER DEPUTY PM
PATTAKOS AND WHOSE ADMIRERS AND REPORTEDLY NUMEROUS
IN GOVERNMENT AND ACADEMIC CIRCLES, SUGGEST GRAVE

INSECURITY OF PRESENT CHURCH LEADER AND, POSSIBLY,
OF HIS MILITARY SPONSORS. MORALE IS LOW AT THE PARISH
LEVEL WHERE POPULAR FEELING IS ALREADY TENDING TO
CYNICAL VIEW THAT ONE FACTION - DRAWN CHIEFLY FROM THE
PELOPONNESSUS, WITH SOME INTELLECTUAL PRETENSIONS, AND
WITH MILITARY SPONSORS - HAS BEEN EXCHANGED FOR ANOTHER
GROUP - DRAWN PRIMARILY FROM THE EPIRUS, AND BUTTRESSED
BY ANOTHER MILITARY SPONSORSHIP.

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